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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 001461

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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARN, IO/P, EUR/ERA AND EUR/AGS

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SUBJECT: SYRIAN COMPLIANCE WITH UNSCR 1559: AUSTRIAN

RESPONSE

REF: STATE 78006

Classified By: ECONOMIC-POLITICAL COUNSELOR GREGORY E. PHILLIPS

REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Embassy Vienna conveyed reftel demarche on April 29 to MFA A/S-equivalent for the Middle East and Africa Ralph Scheide. EconPolCouns and Pol Unit Chief followed up with Scheide on May 3. Scheide reported discussing the matter of the EU-Syria Association Agreement with his German counterpart recently. It was not so much that the Agreement was "on hold," Scheide said, but that the procedure for concluding it had stalled. Scheide thought it necessary to strike a balance. While it was clear that Syria still had much to do to comply fully with UNSCR 1559, it was important to give Syria positive incentives. "Syria deserves some credit for its withdrawal," Scheide said.

[1](#)2. (C) Scheide pointed out that the Syrian Foreign Minister would likely attend the Euro-Med Ministerial in Luxembourg on May 29. While the Minister would probably express annoyance about the lack of progress on the Association Agreement, Scheide thought that "we can live with that. Better to let him come and complain than to disinvite him." The EU could then make it clear to the Syrians that the EU was prepared to continue to process as long as Syria stayed on the path to compliance.

[1](#)3. (C) Scheide and his Syria/Lebanon office director, Wolfgang Lapuh, reiterated that Austria was ready to join a consensus on an EU Clearinghouse listing of Hizbollah as a terrorist organization and regretted that the most recent Clearinghouse had not been able to take a decision to do so. The disarming of militias would prove to be one of the most difficult tasks in achieving compliance with UNSCR 1559, they thought. The UN verification mission would surely cite this as unaccomplished in its report; it would then be up to the Secretary General to give his assessment.

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[1](#)4. (C) Regarding the date for elections, Lapuh noted that it was now impossible to keep to the constitutional 30-day deadline for promulgating a new election law and still hold the elections in May. The old election law was biased in favor of pro-Syrian forces, he observed.

Brown